

Huntington, NY—On Thursday, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) hosted a Video Town Hall Meeting on the situation in Darfur for Long Island High School students. Students were given the opportunity to question the Congressman on his recently-passed House amendment that would facilitate the expansion of a nearby airfield for Darfur relief missions and deployment of international forces. Video-conferencing technology connected the students at Jericho High School and Wyandanch Memorial High School with Congressman Israel in the U.S. Capitol.

“Every military analyst knows that tomorrow’s terrorists come from areas of chronic instability and violence today,” said Congressman Israel. “For me, preventing genocide is not a moral issue alone, it is a national security imperative. That’s why I passed an amendment in the House last week to prepare for genocide relief operations and why I will also continue to educate young people on what they can do to make a difference.”

Last week, Israel and Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) announced the House passage of a Darfur-related amendment they authored for the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Bill. The amendment is intended to send a message to Sudan’s President Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir that the United States is interested in expanding a nearby airfield in Chad for genocide relief missions, NATO operations and a possible U.N. deployment to the region.

Israel has been a leading voice in Congress on the need to create a national discussion on the genocide in Darfur. In January, Israel invited Darfurian refugee Fatima Haroun to be his guest at the 2007 State of the Union Address. In May 2006, Israel hosted the first nationwide Democratic Caucus Online Town Hall on the situation in Darfur with three of his colleagues. Believing that the discussion should take place in all communities and extend beyond the confines of Washington, Israel hosted a “Day on Darfur” briefing in Washington in July 2006 for Long Island clergy members, community leaders, teachers and students. This event built upon the success of the April 2006 “Darfur Day on Long Island,” where over 400 high school and college students, religious, community and business leaders and Darfur refugee Yahya Osman joined together for a day of education, awareness, and discussion in response to the ongoing genocide in Sudan.